

they are the ones, along with some military officers, who masterminded the attacks on voters that Election Day.

Already, this year's electoral violence has begun. On December 5, a group of armed men attacked an evening rally in Pétionville, a wealthy suburb of Port-au-Prince where a crowd of some 10,000 had gathered to hear Aristide speak. At least five people were killed and more than fifty wounded. Presumably, the assault was the work of the Duvalierists. The military remained aloof: "It's a political matter," the Pétionville commander was reported to have commented. Political or otherwise, it was obviously an attempt to scare Aristide's supporters away from the polling places. Few were able to forget the words of the Duvalierist youths who had participated in the attack on Aristide's church in 1988: "Wherever he preaches, there will be a mountain of corpses."

Although he was the latest entry into the electoral fray, Aristide is the clear front-runner. His closest competitor, Marc Bazin, a center-right former World Bank official, is not nearly as popular as the priest, though Bazin was a candidate in the 1987 elections and has built up a more impressive election organization than Aristide. Bazin's coalition party, the National Alliance for Democracy and Progress, is the only one putting up candidates for almost all of the 110 seats in the legislature. Aristide's group, the National Front for Change and Democracy, has managed to put up only fifty.

It is more than possible to imagine a stalemate should Aristide win the presidency and a Bazin coalition take the Parliament. In such a case, an impatient military—and the military is always impatient in Haiti—might be quick to step in. Perhaps hoping to avoid such a dangerous impasse, Aristide has reportedly been courting the socialist wing of Bazin's coalition (in Haiti, politics makes the strangest bedfellows), led by Serge Gilles, an intellectual with strong ties to the French Socialists. Aristide's people have encouraged rumors that Gilles may decide to go with Aristide's front, thereby giving the priest the parliamentary clout he would need in a future government. In such an administration Aristide would be President and Gilles Prime Minister. Bazin would be completely marginalized.

All this is, of course, to talk about Haiti as though it were accustomed to clean elections and as though its politicians, its military and other sectors of its ruling classes have a tradition of obeying constitutional norms and parliamentary protocol. Such anticipatory talk about the 1987 election, for example, proved ridiculous in retrospect, as voters lay decapitated and eviscerated at the polling places.

The United States, which has encouraged Haiti's post-Duvalier elections, has been extremely anxious to see that this one goes off better than the last two (a fraudulent presidential election in January 1988 gave rise to a civilian government soon toppled by the army that had put it in power). After Aristide (who has often been labeled a "radical firebrand" in embassy cables) announced his candidacy, Ambassador Alvin Adams continued to give assurances of U.S. neutrality in the electoral process.

But then the Ambassador, who is famous in Haiti for speaking in ambiguous Creole proverbs, cited this one: "Aprè bal, tanbou lou" (When the party is over, the drums

grow heavy). According to Haitians, he meant that after the fun of Aristide's campaign will come the hard task of governing, for which Aristide is ill suited.

The charges most often leveled against Aristide during his short campaign (by his adversaries but also sometimes by his friends) are that he is a charismatic religious figure singularly unfit for administrative work; that this unsuitability will lead to a crisis in which he is forced to take absolute power or cede power to the military; that he has no longstanding organization behind him; and that his popularity is based on a cult of personality like that of François (Papa Doc) Duvalier, which can lead to dictatorship.

But Aristide himself believes that he is running to bring the Haitian people to power, and that the firm connections he has made with progressive middle-class technocrats and intellectuals over the years will stand him in good stead as an executive. Aristide, no slouch himself on the proverb front, replied to Adams, "Anpil men, chay pa lou" (With many hands, the burden is never heavy). □

## ■ SOVIET YUPPIES

# The Romance of The Market

ERIC FONER

For four months last spring, I taught American history at Moscow State University and, with my wife and 2-year-old daughter, braved the ever-increasing difficulties of daily life in the city. Over the years, many visitors to the Soviet Union have arrived with a fully formed mental image and have seen what they came to see. This was not our experience.

We came to Moscow expecting to find a society reveling in new-found intellectual openness and engaged in an exciting debate over its future. We soon discovered, however, that the early euphoria of *glasnost* had faded. Now, the public mood is one of cynicism about the past and present coupled with deep pessimism about the future. Instead of a spirited, multisided discussion of the country's economic and political restructuring, we found a political situation oddly reminiscent of America's: genuine freedom of speech but little real difference of opinion in public discussion.

On television, in the newspapers and in private conversations (at least among the academic, intellectual and artistic circles in which we traveled), praise of the "free market" is universal. Debate centers on the pace of change, not its direction. Those who voice doubts about the benefits of the impending "market revolution" are dismissed as representatives of the "old thinking."

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In 1917, as John Reed noted in *Ten Days That Shook the World*, the Bolsheviks' appeal lay partly in the fact that at a time of crisis, they alone had "a constructive programme." Today, so fully have advocates of the free market captured the intellectual initiative that no one seems capable of advancing an analysis of the economic crisis or a plan for dealing with it within an explicitly socialist framework.

Ironically, the romance of the market arises as much from the successes of Soviet socialism as from its all-too-apparent failures. Karl Marx expected capitalism to give birth to its gravedigger—an exploited, class-conscious proletariat. In fact, socialism has sown its own seeds of discontent by wrenching the U.S.S.R., at tremendous cost, from backwardness to modernity and by creating, almost from nothing, a vast class of professionals, intellectuals and white-collar workers.

These academics, journalists, artists, scientists and managers stand at the cutting edge of demands for economic change. Unlike their counterparts of an earlier generation, who measured in their own lives how far the Soviet Union had traveled from the widespread illiteracy and social misery of czarist days, this generation compares its conditions of life with the contemporary West. Thanks to *glasnost*, thousands of them have traveled abroad for the first time. And coupled with the crisis of the Soviet economy, their encounter with the Western standard of living has been a shattering experience. To remind such persons that not all Americans share in capitalism's bounty is beside the point. They are interested in their own equivalents overseas, not the plight of the poor or the homeless.

This intelligentsia and managerial class—those the Western press calls "radicals" or "democrats"—are the most insistent advocates of far-reaching economic and political change. In

the U.S.S.R., these terms carry different meanings than they do in the West. Soviet radicals admire Margaret Thatcher, Milton Friedman and the virtues of unfettered capitalism. Each week *Moscow News*, among the most influential radical journals, contains articles that would comfortably find a home in publications of the Heritage Foundation or the American Enterprise Institute.

One piece blamed America's economic problems on labor unions, whose exorbitant wage demands supposedly rendered some industries, like steel and autos, uncompetitive. Another praised General Pinochet for introducing "overdue" economic changes to Chile. According to *Moscow News*, not only should state-owned enterprises be privatized but public welfare spending should be cut to the bone. "The state budget," one article insisted, "cannot take care of everyone. They must protect themselves by earning what they can and using the new conditions of the market economy."

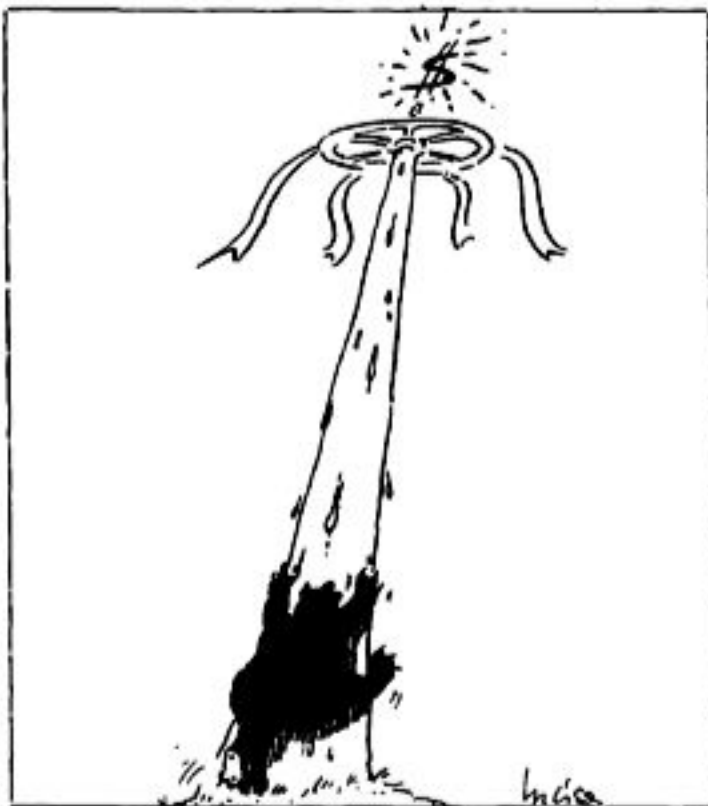
Soviet democrats are more interested in the structure of government—an independent judiciary and multiparty legislature to act as checks against absolutism—than in a politically engaged citizenry. Indeed, they fear the popular will as an obstacle to economic change, and they are not certain that in a democratic system the radical intelligentsia would, in fact, prevail.

Gavril Popov, the newly elected Mayor of Moscow and a man associated with both free-market reform and political democratization, recently pointed out that these two goals are in some sense mutually contradictory. The "tasks that must be carried out"—that is, the restoration of capitalism—will, Popov wrote in *The New York Review of Books*, produce greater and greater economic inequality. That, in turn, will stimulate political disaffection. Popov's solution was not to cushion the inegalitarian impact of the market economy but to speed up economic change before popular opposition has time to coalesce.

"The masses," wrote Popov, "long for fairness and economic equality." This deeply ingrained popular attitude is perhaps Soviet socialism's most enduring intellectual legacy. It goes hand in hand with suspicion of suddenly acquired wealth, widespread distaste for the naked greed now rampant in black-market and hard-currency dealings, a widespread preference for rationing of scarce goods as opposed to raising prices, and a staunch commitment to maintaining the U.S.S.R.'s fraying but still extensive social "safety net."

American journalists periodically have a field day citing belief in equality and suspicion of entrepreneurship as evidence of the innate backwardness of the "Russian character." To Soviet radicals, those attitudes seem a pernicious legacy of seventy years of Communism. As of today, anti-market sentiments have failed to find organized political expression. But they certainly worry free-market advocates. This past spring both the opposition and the official press were filled with articles criticizing equality as an archaic notion, hopelessly out-of-date in the late twentieth century.

Indeed, a new "crime" has lately been added to the list of Stalin's perfidies: By narrowing wage differentials between the skilled and the unskilled, and between professional and





manual workers, he promoted the idea of equality. (In fact, Stalin presided over a steady retreat from wage equality, but it is fashionable today to blame him for every conceivable ill of Soviet society, including those for which he bore no responsibility.)

At first glance, the romance of the market seems to rest on an admixture of naiveté and wishful thinking. The current obsession with uncovering the Soviet Union's hidden history coexists with a remarkable historical amnesia, or ignorance, regarding the West. The radicals assume that the Western standard of living has arisen naturally from the functioning of capitalism; they condemn the very union movement and popular struggles that helped create today's high income levels and mass-consumption societies.

In language reminiscent of our own "end of ideology" theorists of the 1950s, Soviet radicals insist that ideology itself has been discredited, that politics ought to be guided by "common sense," without considering that the idea of the free market is itself ideological. They call for a pragmatic approach to politics, an end to social experiments, and in the same breath propose a transformation of Soviet society every bit as utopian as the original revolution. They have no sense of capitalism and the market as global systems within which, to put it mildly, standards of living vary enormously, and in which the exploitation of Guatemalan peasants or Mexican migrant laborers has something to do with the abundance of fruits and vegetables in American supermarkets.

Yet the widespread appeal of market ideology cannot be attributed simply to self-deception or tunnel vision. Writing about the eighteenth century, the historian Franco Venturi called equality a "protest ideal." It was less a blueprint for change than a criticism of existing society. The market plays the same role in today's Soviet Union.

Despite their belief in equality and their fear of the price increases, unemployment and social dislocation certain to follow in the wake of radical economic reforms, many ordinary Russians find themselves attracted to the idea of the free market. This is not only because it promises a cornucopia of consumer goods (or at least basic items from socks, aspirin and snowsuits to condoms, all of which had disappeared from the shelves by the time we arrived in Moscow). In listening to Russians fascinated with the market's magical qualities, I felt as if I were being transported back to debates at the dawn of modern capitalism.

More than a decade ago, in writing a book about Thomas Paine, I was puzzled by his enthusiastic embrace of the laissez-faire ideology of Adam Smith. Only gradually did I come to understand the profoundly liberating implications of market ideology in the eighteenth century. Opposition to government control of the economy dovetailed with hostility to powerful institutions resting on inherited privilege: the established church, closed corporations, a hereditary monarchy and aristocracy. To men like Paine, the free market was a democratic innovation in a society in which status rested not on individual merit but on one's place in a complex web of privilege and patronage.

In today's U.S.S.R., it is not simply the ubiquitous shortages but how people do manage to obtain things that feeds

discontent. In a world of empty stores, shopping is commonly done through the back door—that is, via bribes, barter and official or family connections. Even those in a position to benefit from this system find it unfair and humiliating. To a large extent, whom you know now determines your standard of living. There is something positively egalitarian about the way money in a market society can erase other social distinctions, about a world in which anybody with the cash can walk into a store and purchase whatever goods he or she pleases, without incurring personal obligations.

Thus popular opinion in the Soviet Union appears poised between fear of the inequalities of a market society and resentment over the inequities daily encountered in the burdensome task of putting a meal on the table. In this situation, it seems unlikely that a coherent alternative to the free-market agenda will develop any time soon. □

## ■ JOBLESS-INSURANCE CUTS

# Out of Work? Out of Luck

KEITH BROOKS AND  
MANNY NESS

Communications specialist John Eng, 45, has lost two jobs in three years. I.T.T. sold his division to another company, and despite thirteen years' seniority he was laid off; he held his next job for eighteen months before the company moved his department to Canada. In 1976, Eng could have collected up to sixty-five weeks of unemployment benefits. Under the current system he got only twenty-six weeks, the maximum allowable: \$245 a week, or about half his previous take-home pay. Those benefits are now considered taxable income. Eng finds himself in a labor market with little use for his specialized skills and will likely have to take a significant pay cut to support his family of six.

Susan Marino applied for unemployment after losing her cashier's job. Her former employer hired a legal consultant and succeeded in challenging her claim for unemployment benefits. As a single mother Marino is in a position she never thought possible, with no choice but to apply for welfare.

Eng and Marino are among some 7 million workers officially counted as unemployed out of a work force of almost 118 million. Marino became one of the millions of jobless people ineligible to collect unemployment benefits; Eng joins more than 2 million who have exhausted all benefits for the fiscal year ending June 1990. It is no longer a debate for them as to whether the United States is in a recession.

*Keith Brooks and Manny Ness have recently helped initiate a grass-roots campaign to reform the unemployment benefits system. Brooks is a founder of the National Unemployed Network; Ness has been active in a number of unions.*